

QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY GATEWAY

January 3, 2011

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Mission

*We will enhance
the quality of life
in Queen Anne's
County by
preserving
families,
protecting
children and
vulnerable adults
and by
empowering
individuals to
achieve
independence.*

Director's Spotlight

We survived the last quarter of a very tough year by working together to meet the ever increasing demands of our job. Hopefully this newsletter will be able to shine light on the special ways we have performed our duties, enlighten us to what goes on in other units in our department, and inspire us to continue to do for others who need our help.

In this last quarter I know there were times when many of you reached into your own pocket to give to others even though we have less in our pockets than we used to have due to the cuts. Keep dreaming with me that things will turn around soon for us, our families and neighbors and our country.

Cathy Dougherty, Director

Community Outreach Programs

The QAC Outreach Program had a very active summer and fall of 2010. Centreville Community Church expanded their traditional day long fair to five full days of fun – each day featuring a different theme. The Agency was pleased to meet and greet the community on Government Night, July 1st. Julie Handzo was invited on stage to present an overview of the Agency's mission and explain many of the programs that we offer.

The Queen Anne's County Fair proved to be our biggest opportunity to reach out to the community. Staff worked non-stop for a week leading up to the fair preparing "Green Shopping" give-away bags filled with items that promoted MEAP, JOBS, and Foster Care & Adoptions. From 08/09/10 to 08/14/10, volunteers including our board members manned our booth, answered all types of questions, and provided a variety of literature to the community. Our Advisory Board donated a backpack that was given to a lucky boy and girl.

The Goodwill Fire Company hosted their 2nd Annual Open House on 09/25/10. The Agency's table was centrally located and filled with useful information, giveaways, and staff ready to answer or assist any community member in need.

Community Outreach Program continued

Vision

We envision a quality of life in Queen Anne's County in which individuals and families achieve success and are safe from abuse and neglect.

During the late fall and winter months, the Outreach Program focuses on back to school programs and helping those in need with the holidays. Consequently, the team spends more time inside the office, developing "in-house" ways to assist our customers.

This year the Agency developed an outreach table that is set up in the vestibule with many back-to-school items that visitors were welcome to take. Children were invited to show off their writing skills by sharing "What I like about School" posters that were displayed until 10/01/10.

The Community Resource Corner has been consistently updated with community events such as Thanksgiving Dinners, Toy Drives, and Winter Clothing giveaways.

Values

We must be involved in maintaining a work environment that values teamwork, respect, dignity and honesty within the organization and community.

The Community Outreach Program also continues to use QAC TV as a means to deliver information to the community. The Agency currently has 7 notices running on the channel with messages ranging from MEAP to Advisory Board information.

If you know of a community event, outreach opportunity or if you would like to volunteer, please contact Nadine Mentecki at ext. 8048.

We are committed to a high quality of service that empowers individuals and families, assists in times of crisis and economic hardship and protects individuals from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Family Investment Unit's Unbelievable Success

The Family Investment team of Queen Anne's County DSS processed an average of 98 percent of all welfare claims received within the federally required 30-day window, exceeding the mandated compliance by an average of 2%. Dedication and Teamwork has proven to reflect the efforts Family Investment Team for their remarkable contribution to the Department of Human Resources success.

The Career Center

Queen Anne's County Department of Social Services introduces the "Career Center". The Queen Anne's County Career Center is open to the public Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Our partner DLLR is available in the Career Center on Tuesdays and Wednesdays to assist customers as needed. The Career Center has many resources that can help county residents find out what type of job is right for them using Career Scope, develop skills to compete, and explore Career directions using O*Net. The Non-Custodial Parent Employment Program (NPEP) prepares non-custodial parents for employment to help them meet their child support obligations. Job Skill Training Classes are available to eligible customers. These classes are designed to enhance interviewing skills, achieve an attitude for success, project a professional appearance and develop networking skills. Classes are offered in 4-week sessions on Mondays & Wednesdays. Specially trained Career Specialist help TCA eligible customers view open positions on the internet, create resumes, and set career goals. Seven participants have reported employment and two participants are currently enrolled in a certificate program.

Reception Area

Gone are the days of collecting data on paper logs! Gone are the days of shouting a customer's name across the lobby to get their attention! Gone are the days when 50 visitors constituted a "busy day" – in fact, the front desk processed an average of 1,119 customers per month in 2010. Yes, Virginia (no, not Ms. Ingling) we have arrived into the 21st Century.

With the installation of Free Flow, came a whole new way of doing things. Front desk staff was given the opportunity to test a modified version of Free Flow at the beginning of 2010. We learned very quickly that customers could be routed more efficiently and data collected more accurately by using the electronic intake system. Everyone was ready for the full implementation by the end of summer.

In April 2010 former Secretary Brenda Donald released a new initiative outlining 8 Core Business Practices. The first 2 practices changed the face of the reception area completely. Two stations were created so that customers could be directed more efficiently. The Greeter/Reception Station #1 serves customers who have an appointment, are here to apply, or are visiting. Express Services Station #2 serves customers who are here to drop off documentation, which is copied, logged, receipted, date-stamped, and delivered to employee mailboxes.

Implementing Free Flow and the Core Business Practices may have looked chaotic at times; both systems have been invaluable resources to managing the increased volume of customers that we see today. Customers, Staff, and Supervisors seem to like the changes as well:

- Today it takes the front desk half the time to process the same information as it did this time last year – reducing a customer's wait time;
- Electronic receipts are generated, providing customer confirmation and a tracking system for Case Managers;

Reception Area continued

- Automatic email notifications;
- Better data collection.

For weeks, front desk staff prepared for the arrival of Child Support – names were placed on the In/Out Board, additional lines were added to the phone system, and new flyers were printed with list of instructions. Then on October 1st it happened – CHILD SUPPORT returned! Much to everyone's satisfaction, the transition went smoothly, and now that the cold winter months are upon us, our customers seem very happy that we are truly a one-stop agency.

During the month of October 2010, each member of the Management Team took a two hour turn working at the front desk. Everyone said that it was an enlightening experience. So, whether you sit at the front desk all day, volunteer to cover when needed, or pick up a telephone when it's ringing – the effort is greatly appreciated. As always – if you would like to try your hand at the front, please contact Nadine at ext. 8048 to schedule a time (*with supervisory approval, of course*). You're sure to get something out of the experience – we guarantee it!

Work Experience Position (WEX)

There is a new acronym to add to our vocabulary – WEX or Work Experience Position. WEX positions are volunteer positions designed to give the incumbent hands-on work experience. Candidates are selected from participants in the JOBS program. Each candidate is provided with training opportunities that can be used to gain skills to compete.

Our local department is delighted to welcome Shana Black as the first ever WEX volunteer. Shana has been assisting the Family Investment Unit with various clerical duties. Welcome aboard Shana, you're doing a great job!

Agency Activities

On November 16, 2010 Terri Lowther and Joyce Davis attended the 14th Annual Adoption Celebration held at the Baltimore Zoo. The adoptive parent of the year from Queen Anne's County was Elaine Stafford. Queen Anne's County accepted the award on behalf of Ms. Stafford who was not able to attend. Ms. Stafford adopted a 14 year old foster care youth placed in her home for three-and-a-half years. The youth and her brother had been placed with Ms. Stafford twice, and most recently in 2006, when they entered foster care for a second time.

On August 24, 2010 our agency completed an adoption of a 5 month old baby girl. The child's birth parents contacted our department before her birth and decided that adoption was the best decision for their baby.

The Services Unit has been actively working towards the development of a Queen Anne's County Child Advocacy Center (CAC). The Child Protective Services staff has been meeting regularly with law enforcement and State's Attorney, and has added a doctor and a mental health provider to the team. These additions are required to become an accredited CAC. They call the team the CARE Team, which stands for Child Abuse and Response Evaluation Team. In January 2011, a fundraising committee specifically for the CAC will meet to kick off fundraising events for the year.

Agency Activities continued

The foster/adoptive families from the mid-shore celebrated a night out at the ball game at Perdue Stadium in Salisbury on August 6, 2010. Several families were treated to a fantastic time with a tour of the stadium, a delicious buffet, free giveaways for the children, fireworks and entertainment from everyone's favorite, Sherman the Shorebird! The event also provided an opportunity to promote foster care and adoption on the mid-shore to prospective families. This has become an annual event and we are all looking forward to this year's night out with the Shorebirds.

The Queen Anne's County Circuit Court and Queen Anne's County Department of Social Services hosted its annual Foster/Adoptive family picnic on August 19, 2010 at Tuckahoe State Park at 5:00 p.m. Approximately forty-two people attended the picnic. The children enjoyed playing at the Park playground and visiting with the Circuit Court Judge, The Honorable Thomas Ross, and the Circuit Court Master, Patrick Palmer. The weather was perfect and a great time was had by all.

Our Director, Cathy Dougherty, has been selected as one of three Directors, on the "Improving Health Care Outcome for Children in Foster Care" Summit. The first of 6 meetings was held on 12/9/10 at the University of Maryland, Baltimore with a cross-section of doctors, caseworkers and supervisors, foster parents, and advocates to help in Maryland's development of this required Coordinated Health Plan as part of Fostering Connections.

The Queen Anne's County Circuit Court and Queen Anne's County Department of Social Services hosted a Holiday Party for all foster children and parents on December 8, 2010. The celebration was held at the Department of Aging and 65 people were in attendance. The festivities included a catered turkey dinner, crafts and a much anticipated appearance by Santa and his elf. Each child received a personalized gift from Santa and left with a smile on their face.

Shelter Operations Exercise

On October 22, 2010 staff participated in a Shelter Operations Exercise held at our agency. The shelter exercise allowed staff to become familiar with the contents of our shelter kits and the American Red Cross Shelter forms. The exercise provided staff an opportunity to set up a shelter facility within an appropriate time period. Victims were interviewed using the American Red Cross Shelter Registration forms. Staff assessed the shelter needs and made recommendations during a "hot wash" following the exercise.

For more information on Emergency Management visit <http://www.mema.state.md.us>. FEMA Independent Study Program, ICS 100, 200, 700, and 800 courses can be found via DHRNet- MEMA-NIMS/ICS or at <http://www.training.fema.gov/IS/>. The Maryland Emergency Operations Plan can be found on MEMA via DHRNet or <http://mema.state.md.us>.



Child Support Has Returned!

Queen Anne's County Office of Child Support Enforcement joined state service and Queen Anne's County Department of Social Services on October 1, 2010. Child Support had been a pilot privatized agency since November 1, 1996. The Child Support Unit is staffed with 8 people; Kathy Nolan, Assistant Director; Lori Robinson, Supervisor; Melissa Winborne, Lead Worker; Shannon Jones and Elizabeth Phillips are Child Support Specialists enforcing cases; and Doug Fraley, Fiscal Technician. Jan Finley, Attorney and Theresa Morris are responsible for the establishment, modification and UIFSA process of cases.

There are approximately 1,327 cases total in this unit. This unit is responsible for collecting child support on those cases from the time the order is established until the child emancipates at age 18 or graduation from high school. There are various tools that are used to enforce a case. The worker can intercept tax refunds, suspend driver's licenses, suspend professional licenses, reporting the arrears balances to the credit bureau, attach wages, attach bank accounts and intercept lottery winnings. The worker can also attach workman's compensation benefits. When all else fails the worker has the ability to take the non-custodial parent to court for disobeying a court order. The worker attends court 3 times a month, once before a Master for contempt, once before a Judge for contempt and when the worker must request a date to establish court orders and handle modifications.

After being a part of DSS for only a few months, it is difficult to gauge change with statistics and percentage signs. Anecdotal evidence seems more readily available, and at least for line-level staff, perhaps more meaningful. In these few months staff have witnessed child protective staff asking about the child support process in an effort to assist an at risk parent, a jobs specialist learns what steps a non-custodial parent is required to take to regain a Driver's License, and child support staff received training on specific CARES codes to serve child support purposes. These were but a few of numerous questions and conversations going on between units.

These exchanges often provide assistance for a single customer, but represent an increased understanding and ability to assist all customers. Certainly, the integration of all services fosters just such an environment, and ensures better services in the future. For an agency focused on service, and the needs of our most vulnerable residents, it is difficult to perceive a more valuable outcome. Everyone in our unit is an integral part of the team. To accomplish our goals we all have to work together and handle our piece of the work.



Employee News

Jennifer Crumble was hired as the OHEP worker.

Denime McCain was hired as the Assistant Director for FIA.

Darlene Kuechler was hired as the FIA worker.

New Child Support Unit effective October 1, 2010 – Jan Finley, Doug Fraley, Shannon Jones, Theresa Morris, Kathleen Nolan, Liz Phillips, Lori Robinson and Melisa Winborne.

Terri Lowther is supervising Jody Simmons, a first year MSW student beginning September 2010.

Chris Parmegiani was hired as the Senior Employment Worker.

Shana Black is a volunteer through the WEX Program.

Airlee Johnson was selected as Employee of the Quarter from July – September 2010.

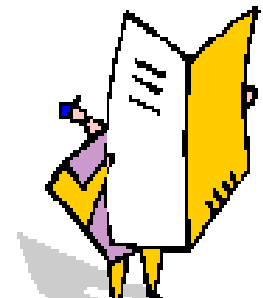
Joanne Hynson was selected as Employee of the Quarter from October – December 2010.

Terri Lowther was selected as the “Customer Service Worker” of the year.

Darlene Kuechler was selected as the “Family Investment Worker” of the year.

Jody Simmons gave birth to “Nolan” on September 13, 2010.

Susan Coppage gave birth to “Delaney” on December 13, 2010.



Employees of the Quarter

Airlee Johnson – 7/10 to 9/10

Joanne Hynson – 10/10 to 12/10



PQI Achievements

Action Planning Team: Review and Revision of Services Standard Operating Procedures and Policies. Placement of the SOPs and Policies are on the All Staff Folder.

Customer Satisfaction Team:

- Coordinating a Children's Book Drive for the Lobby
- Collecting Videos to Promote Agency Programs and Services.

Employee Appreciation Team:

- Child Support Welcome Celebration
- Employee Breakfast
- Baked Potato Lunch
- Holiday Feast
- Employee of the Quarter
- Birthday Cards

Maryland Charities Team: Week of festivities for the 2010 Campaign which collect over \$2000.

QAC Gateway Team: Publishing a Semi-Annual Newsletter, intended to inform Employees and highlight Agency Activities.

Peer Record Review Team: Review Records to Identify Patterns and make Corrective Action.

Program Evaluation Team:

- Made Changes to the Reception Area to Enhance Efficiency and Customer Service
- Obtained Basic Cable for the Agency

Risk Management Team: Publication of the Employee Health and Safety Newsletter, an electronic newsletter that provides health and safety tips to staff.

Employee Appreciation Committee – Thank You!

The members of the Employee Appreciation Committee would like to thank everyone who supported our events this past year. Without your participation throughout the year, we would not have been able to hold our Holiday Feast.

BIRTHDAYS

Betty Whyte – 1/1

Peggy Landskroener – 1/11

Judi Beskid – 1/20

Brittany VanBlargan – 1/21

Joyce Davis – 1/27

Bonnie McLendon – 2/2

Patricia Gallaway – 2/10

Daniel Johnson – 2/12

Catherine Gray – 2/25

Cathy Dougherty – 2/26

Liz Phillips – 3/18

Lori Robinson – 3/18

Melissa Winborne – 3/28

Nancy Roe – 3/29

Susan Anthony – 4/1

Lyn Holly – 4/2

Terri Lothar – 4/12

Dianne Heffernan – 4/14

Alex Sweetak – 4/18

Pam Marvel – 4/21

Teresa Morris – 5/6

Tanae Colbert – 6/13

Melonie Truslow – 6/18

Nadine Mentecki – 6/19

Darlene Kuechler – 6/20

Joanne Hynson – 6/24

Marge Slama – 6/24



Service Awards

Jan Finley – 10

Dianne Heffernan – 5

Laurie Marks – 10

Denime McCain – 5

Patty Gallaway – 15

Peggy Landskroener – 20

Sharon Mohr – 15

Kristin Roemer - 10

Advisory Board Members

Kate Tumulty, Chairperson; Martha Anthony, Vice-Chairperson; Gail Lundberg; Deborah Lawrence; Bob Simmons, County Commissioner; Robin JL Heinecke; Bonnie Larrimore; Sharon Robertson; Veronica Holthaus, and David Quinn, Foster Parent. The Advisory Board meets - second Thursday of each month.

Newsletter Committee

Alice Collins, Doug Fraley, Dianne Heffernan, Peggy Landskroener, Lori Loder, Pam Marvel, Sherrie Morton and Pam Tingle